

 Georgia Technology Authority	Georgia Technology Authority	
Title:	Georgia.gov Linking	
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POC for Changes:	Office of General Counsel	
Synopsis:	Appropriate use, placement and removal of links on georgia.gov	

PURPOSE

This standard establishes the conditions under which external entities are permitted to establish links to georgia.gov and the criteria for the appropriate use, placement and removal of links on georgia.gov. This standard also affirmatively states and preserves the legal status of the georgia.gov web portal as a “non-public forum” for the posting of government information and services.

SCOPE

All entities that have, maintain, or link to, a page or sub-portal presence within georgia.gov.

STANDARD

1. Links To georgia.gov

Permission to link to georgia.gov is granted subject to the georgia.gov “link to” requirements stated below. External entities should be made aware that specific georgia.gov pages (e.g., agency sub-portal pages) may be altered, moved, or deleted at any time without notice. Entities and individuals linking to georgia.gov must continuously verify links to pages other than the georgia.gov home page (www.georgia.gov).

Permission to link to georgia.gov is granted subject to the following requirements:

- A. Entities and individuals linking to georgia.gov shall not capture or display georgia.gov pages within frames.
- B. Entities and individuals linking to georgia.gov shall not present georgia.gov content as its own, or otherwise misrepresent

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georgia.gov content or misinform visitors about the origin or ownership of georgia.gov content.

- C. Any link to georgia.gov should be a full forward link that passes the client browser to georgia.gov.

2. Links From georgia.gov

This section outlines the criteria and requirements that external web sites must meet before a link from a georgia.gov page to such external sites can be placed on georgia.gov. Agencies may consider links to any site that, in the agency's opinion, promotes the goals, purpose and the mission of georgia.gov the sub-portal and/or specific sub-portal page upon which the link would appear. The fundamental purpose of georgia.gov is to provide online access to government information, functions and services. georgia.gov is considered a nonpublic forum; it is not a forum for public communication and debate. This means that georgia.gov can refuse requests for links to certain sites and can selectively choose those links that are compatible with the intended purpose of the georgia.gov sub-portal or page upon which the external link would appear. In order to preserve the non-public forum status of georgia.gov, the following criteria have been established to govern the selection of acceptable external links on georgia.gov:

A. Criteria supporting inclusion of an external link:

georgia.gov accepts link requests made by federal, state, and local governments that provide information and services that benefit Georgia citizens and businesses. At its discretion, georgia.gov may link to non-governmental web sites that contain information and/or services that further the purpose of georgia.gov. Entities on georgia.gov must review any potential external link that would appear within their content to determine its relevance and appropriateness to the intended purpose of the particular georgia.gov sub-portal or page on which the link would appear. External links to sites whose activities support the overall purpose of georgia.gov may be allowed where the linked site meets one or more of the following criteria:

- 1) Sites of a state, local or federal governmental agency or local school board.
- 2) Sites that are maintained by an organization that receives direct financial support from the State of Georgia and whose content is compatible with or otherwise supports the intended purpose of the georgia.gov web page or site where the link appears.
- 3) Sites that have a direct contractual relationship with the State of Georgia/submitting georgia.gov entity for the provision of goods or services and whose content is compatible with or otherwise supports the intended purpose of the georgia.gov web page or site where the

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link appears.

- 4) Sites that provide a unique online resource that will assist in the provision of services and/or information and whose content is compatible with or otherwise supports the intended purpose of the georgia.gov web page or site where the link appears.
- 5) Sites that provide not for profit/non-religious services and whose content is compatible with or otherwise supports the intended purpose of the georgia.gov web page or site where the link appears.

B. Criteria supporting exclusion of an external link:

External links are prohibited to sites that fall within any of the following criteria:

- 1) Sites that are political in nature, or are political advocacy sites for a political party, candidate, special interest group, etc. 2) Sites that are religious in nature, or are a religious advocacy site for a particular religious group, sect, denomination, issue, etc.
- 3) Sites that are owned, managed or provide content for commercial entities or purposes, that do not have a direct contractual relationship with the State of Georgia/submitting georgia.gov agency for the provision of goods and/or services.
- 4) Sites containing content that a State of Georgia resident may reasonably consider offensive. Offensive content includes:
 - (a) sexual content or images;
 - (b) slurs against race, religious or political beliefs, age, gender, sexual orientation, national origin or physical attributes;
 - (c) content that aids or incites violence or crime; or
 - (d) sites which link directly to other content which when perceived within a browser would be in violation of (1), (2) or (3) above.
- 5) Sites whose content is not compatible with or does not reasonably relate to the intended purpose of the georgia.gov website or pages where the link would appear.
- 6) Sites that contain content written by many different people which are not actively and appropriately moderated or edited by the host of the site. (e.g., threaded discussion groups, chat rooms, bulletin boards, and other largely unedited, unmoderated content authored by persons who are not owners, operators, or agents of a particular site)

Further, GTA reserves the right to deny or remove links to external sites without further notice, if it determines that the external web site contains misleading or unsubstantiated claims, conflicts with georgia.gov policies and standards, or is in conflict with one or more of the criteria supporting inclusion of an external link.

3. Deep Linking with Express Permission

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"Deep linking" is the practice of placing an external link on a web page to a page or application located inside or within another site (i.e., a link to a page other than the linked-to site's home page). Deep linking is relatively common, but should only be done with permission. Deep linking may cause confusion over the authorship or ownership of content, as well as infringe on the intellectual property rights of others.

A. Deep Linking Requirements

To reduce the likelihood of confusion as well as reduce the risk of claims of infringement, agencies submitting content for georgia.gov must obtain the prior permission of the site/content owner prior to engaging in deep linking. Some sites will state within their Terms of Use that deep linking is permitted. This will suffice as suitable permission.

GTA reserves the right to request proof of an agency's permission to use deep links at any time. Failure to produce such proof may result in the removal or deletion of the links or site/pages upon which they appear.

4. georgia.gov External Link Review

External links appearing on georgia.gov pages are reviewed periodically to verify that the georgia.gov Linking Standard is still being met. The georgia.gov Linking Standard will be periodically reviewed by GTA and revised as necessary.

GTA reserves the right to remove links, without any notification to agencies, for any of the reasons specified in Section 5 below.

5. Link Removal Criteria

External links appearing on georgia.gov pages may be reviewed at any time, and may be removed without any notification to agencies for any of the following reasons:

- The link no longer points to the original information or resource to which it was intended to point;
- The information pointed to by the link is inaccurate, misleading or otherwise violates the criteria and requirements set forth above;
- Access to the information has become difficult due to non-standard formatting, lengthy download times, or intrusive advertising;
- The link is permanently unreachable or remains unavailable for a lengthy period (especially where GTA is unable to contact the site manager about the site's status);
- The external link is a "deep link" and the submitting agency does not have permission to "deep link" to the particular web site or page;

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- The external web site or the submitting georgia.gov entity fails to comply with the written linking agreement, if any;
- Traffic from the externally linked site excessively burdens the georgia.gov Portal Contact Center.
- If GTA receives a claim of infringement or inappropriate linking associated with a particular link, GTA will notify the appropriate entity so that it may respond to the claim; however, please note that GTA may unilaterally decide to remove the link or content in question until the issue is resolved.

6. Link Disclaimer Statements

All georgia.gov pages that contain external links will include a hyperlink to the standard Link Disclaimer included in the Important Notices Page.

To read the current Link Disclaimer, go to <http://www.georgia.gov> and click on "**Important Notices**" at the bottom of the page.

This hyperlink will be included at the bottom of all georgia.gov pages including all agency sub-portals. The hyperlink has already been incorporated into the georgia.gov Vignette templates. Agencies will be trained how to use these Vignette templates to maintain their sub-portals. Agencies may only modify their sub-portal via the Vignette application and templates.

ENFORCEMENT

Agencies engaging in appropriate linking practices may be subject to claims of intellectual property rights infringement.

Entities who engage in appropriate use (including unauthorized framing) of georgia.gov content may be subject to administrative, civil or criminal actions by entities of the State of Georgia.

AUTHORITY

O.C.G.A. Sections 50-25-4(a)(10), (23), (29) and section 50-25-7.13.

GUIDELINES

All links created by agencies for use on georgia.gov must comply with this Linking Standard. Links that comply with this Standard are classified as either Internal or External Links. Agencies are strongly encouraged to adhere to the following Internal and External Link Guidelines for all links

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appearing on their agency sub-portals.

Internal Link Guidelines

In the context of georgia.gov, internal links are connections from one georgia.gov web page to another georgia.gov web page where both pages, as well as the links, are maintained by an agency through the Vignette application and templates. Internal links may be presented on web pages as text, icons or images.

All agencies should adhere to the following guidelines for internal links appearing on their georgia.gov sub-portals:

1. All applications, directories, and filenames should be lowercase and include the appropriate extensions (e.g., html, pdf, tff).
2. All links should be relative URLs and managed via the Vignette Content Management System.
3. Animated links are not permitted.
4. Annotated, Embedded, Link Lists, and Graphical Links are permissible.
5. Content linking will be managed via the Vignette Content Management System.

External Link Guidelines

In the context of georgia.gov, an external link is a hyperlink from a georgia.gov web page to another web page external to, or outside of, georgia.gov. Links from an agency's georgia.gov sub-portal to another agency's georgia.gov sub-portal are considered internal links. External links may be used on georgia.gov web pages as text, icons or images.

All agencies should adhere to the following guidelines for external links appearing on their georgia.gov sub-portals:

1. When the destination of the link is not within the georgia.gov portal environment, GTA recommends launching a new browser window where the destination page of the external link is presented. Alternatively, agencies may choose to present the constituent an intermediate page stating that the destination page is not within the georgia.gov environment and that the privacy, security, and accessibility of the destination is not governed by the policies of the georgia.gov portal. The constituent should be given the option to continue or discontinue with a minimal number of clicks.
2. The external link destination page should not be framed in the georgia.gov look and feel and it must include a privacy statement and security statement.
3. The Agency has reviewed the GTA georgia.gov Link Standard and confirmed that the external link complies with it.

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Each agency submitting content for georgia.gov is free to adopt more specific policies governing the use of external links within their content as long as such policies do not conflict with this Standard.

Note: The PSG number was changed from S-03-008.02 on September 1, 2008.

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